

Toward an ICA Code of Conduct: Community Workshop

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Abstract:

Like many large organizations, the International Cartographic Association (ICA) has unfortunately had members experience personal harms from interacting with other members while attending events. The introduction of a Code of Conduct in scientific associations is currently the gold standard (International Science Council, 2025) to protect attendees and promote a respectful and collegial environment, which the ICA strives to meet. Thus, developing and implementing a Code of Conduct is a priority for the ICA. Adopting a Code of Conduct can increase safety and respect within the ICA community by establishing clear rules for expected behavior. Although a Code of Conduct is related to a Code of Ethics, a Code of Conduct focuses on personal behavior, rather than broad ethical issues relating to the field of cartography as a whole. A well-defined Code of Conduct can benefit the ICA by providing a universal framework for attendees to navigate whether certain actions are appropriate, such as what constitutes “disruptive behavior,” and how the ICA will respond to protect individuals and the community if such behavior occurs.

Initial efforts were made by the ICA Working Group Next Generation Cartographers in early 2023 to provide a common ground for members (NGC, 2023; Nestel et al., 2025). The NGC Code of Conduct draft was based on examples from NACIS (2024), Geek Feminism (2024), Brown University (2017), and the Data Visualization Society (2021). NGC's draft is a starting point for further discussions on developing a Code of Conduct for the ICA, which began at a panel session at the regional ICA EuroCarto conference in 2024 (Nestel et al.).

Given the ICA's diverse international community, cultural norms and social dynamics can vary significantly, and misunderstandings can happen even with positive intentions. Therefore, developing clear language to create common ground among members is critical to ensuring the Code of Conduct is as objective as possible. This workshop at ICC 2025 aims to gather community insights on non-negotiable items and potential shortcomings or pitfalls in the draft Code of Conduct to identify paths for development for the needs of the international cartographic community, considering such topics as compliance with laws and regulations, conflicts of interest, confidentiality, non-discrimination, inclusive and respectful culture, social and environmental responsibilities, non-retaliation policy towards people reporting irregularities, reporting mechanisms, consequences of violations, and training and continued improvement of the Code of Conduct as the ICA evolves. Ultimately, our goal is to foster a conversation on how we wish to interact with each other and how we can build a more welcoming, collegial and respectful culture.

During the workshop, we will engage in a facilitated live discussion, assisted by a digital platform which will enable all workshop attendees to contribute anonymously to our discussion. Participants may also provide feedback at the end of the session for thoughts arising later, and will be provided with an opportunity to join ongoing and future conversations about the ICA's Code of Conduct.

All members of the ICA community are welcome and encouraged to attend. No matter your position in the ICA, your feedback is critical. Please join us in developing an informed Code of Conduct for the ICA community!

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